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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City Attorney's Office Releases 2015 Theft Stats

Central Ohio shoplifters hit retailers' bottom line more than ever before

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. released information today on the misdemeanor theft charges his office filed in 2015 and the numbers show a host of increases when compared to data from recent years.

The City Attorney's Prosecution Division filed a total of 4590 theft charges last year, an increase of 11.2 percent from the previous year's 4128 filings. The total value of stolen merchandise recovered increased 22.7 percent to \$695,527 in 2015. The average value of each theft also increased, from \$137.29 in 2014 to \$151.53 in 2015.

"Retail theft is a daily battle," said City Attorney Richard C. Pfeiffer, Jr. "A recent report estimates that over \$13 billion in goods are stolen from U.S. merchants each year, costs which unfortunately get absorbed by consumers."

Another statistic that continued to trend higher in 2015 was the number of cases involving thefts over \$500. Since the Ohio Legislature raised the felony theft limit from \$500 to \$1000 in 2012, Columbus prosecutors have seen high dollar misdemeanor thefts more than double.

One statistic that remained steady—albeit because it likely couldn't get much higher—is the number of cases filed against repeat offenders, also known as serial thieves and professional shoplifters. Seven years ago, 58 percent of theft charges involved repeat offenders whereas that number surged to 81 percent in 2014 and remained there in 2015—meaning four out of five theft cases were perpetrated by individuals with prior criminal charges.

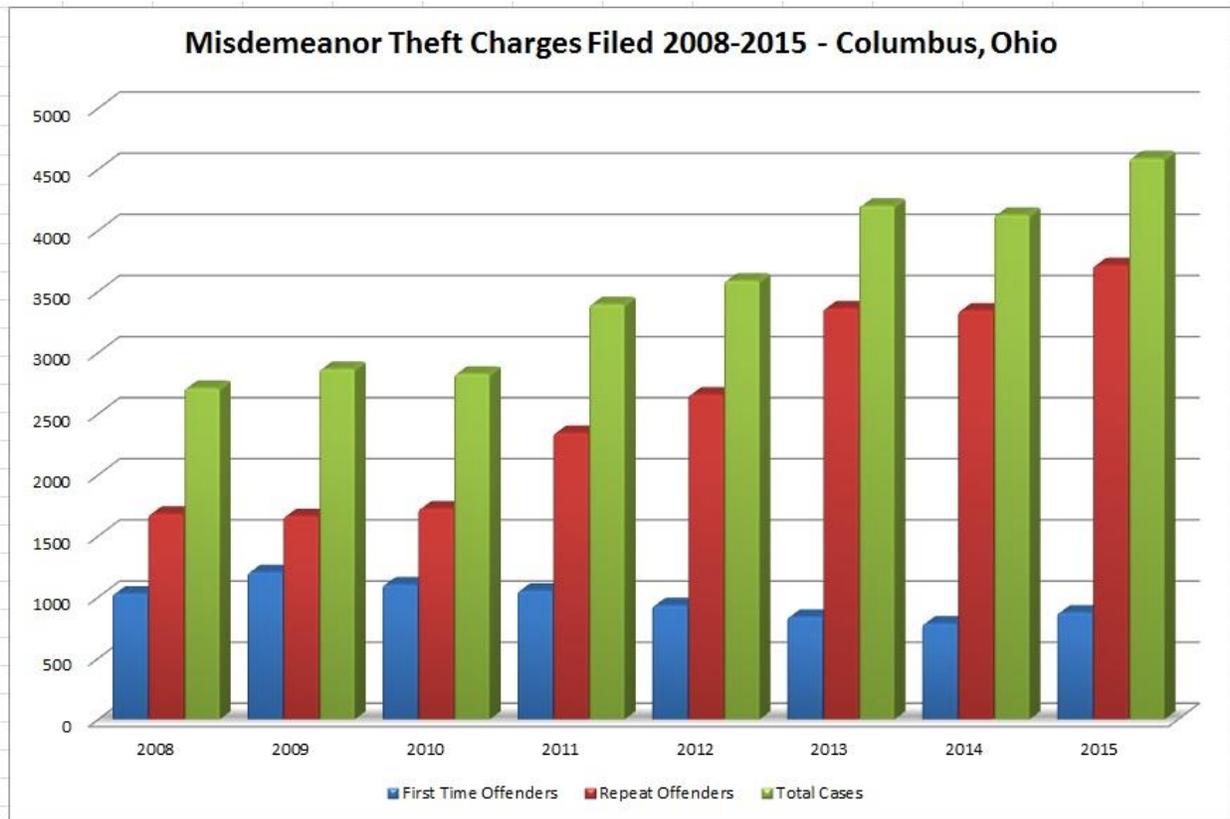
One such thief who contributed his share to the rising shoplifting statistics in 2015 is 31 year old Matthew Edward Hamilton. Hamilton has been charged with theft on at least 21 prior occasions and currently is wanted on four outstanding arrest warrants, including a felony warrant for receiving stolen property.

Hamilton also is accused of stealing several household items from Walmart—including an air conditioner, modem, cookware, air mattress, and air pump—worth a total retail value of \$258.26.

"These escalating theft trends are a national problem," said First Assistant City Prosecutor Bill R. Hedrick. "Much like the rest of the country, here in Columbus we attribute the rise in theft cases to a number of things, but most specifically to the heroin epidemic, organized retail crime, and the ability to sell stolen merchandise easily through online sites."

Anyone with information on Matthew Edward Hamilton is asked to contact First Assistant City Prosecutor Bill R. Hedrick at 614.645.8874 or brhedrick@columbus.gov.

Per state law, the Columbus City Attorney's office prosecutes misdemeanor crimes, not felonies.



| Year | First Time Offenders | Repeat Offenders | Total Cases | Total Value Recovered | Avg. Amount | Cases Over \$500 |
|------|----------------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------|
| 2008 | 1030 | 1681 | 2711 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| 2009 | 1205 | 1663 | 2868 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| 2010 | 1103 | 1725 | 2828 | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| 2011 | 1053 | 2344 | 3397 | \$339,411.14 | \$99.91 | N/A |
| 2012 | 933 | 2657 | 3590 | \$422,940.19 | \$117.81 | 134 |
| 2013 | 840 | 3362 | 4202 | \$539,641.87 | \$128.43 | 168 |
| 2014 | 784 | 3344 | 4128 | \$566,758.34 | \$137.29 | 204 |
| 2015 | 875 | 3715 | 4590 | \$695,527.97 | \$151.53 | 270 |

WANTED



MATTHEW EDWARD
HAMILTON

DOB: 6/24/1984 (Age 31)

Height: 6'0" **Weight:** 205
Hair: Brown **Eyes:** Blue

Last Known Address:
9707 Borrer Rd.
Orient, OH 43146

Case Number(s):
2015 CRA 024307 | 2015 CRB 017934
2015 CRB 023086 | 2015 CRB 024308

Charge(s):
2913.02 – Theft (two counts)
2913.51(A) – Receiving Stolen Property
2925.12 – Possessing Drug Abuse Instruments